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Open letter to Nat Hentoff & The Village Voice

CIA runs NY Times, says Krassner paranoia patrol

Feb. 15, 1972
Dear Nat,

For the past couple of months I've been investigating the Manson case, and there is evidence of involvement with Scientology and the CIA. During the course of my research I discovered that John Leonard's double review of *American Grotesque* by James Kirkwood and *A Heritage of Stone* by Jim Garrison had been cut short, with meaning changed, by the *New York Times*.

On December 1, 1970, under the headline, "Who Killed John F. Kennedy?" the review in the early edition of the Times concluded:

(Garrison) insists that the Warren Commission, the executive branch of the government, some members of the Dallas Police Department, the pathologists at Bethesda who performed the second Kennedy autopsy, and many, many others must have known they were lying to the American public.

Mysteries Persist

Frankly, I prefer to believe that the Warren Commission did a poor job, rather than a dishonest one. I like to think that Mr. Garrison invents monsters to explain incompetence. (In the next edition, the review ended at this point, chopped off in mid-paragraph. The headline was changed to "The Shaw-Garrison Affair" and the sub-head disappeared altogether. In the original version it continued:) *But until somebody explains why two autopsies came to two different conclusions about the President's wounds, why the limousine was washed out and rebuilt without investigation, why certain witnesses near the "grassy knoll" were never asked to testify before the Commission, why we were all so eager to buy Oswald's brilliant marksmanship in split seconds, why no one inquired into Jack Ruby's relations with a staggering variety of strange people, why a "loner" like Oswald always had friends and could always get a passport — who can blame the Garrison guerrillas for fantasizing?*

Something stinks about this whole affair. "A Heritage of Stone" rehashes the smelliness; the recipe is as unappetizing as our doubts about the official version of what happened. (Would then-Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy have endured his brother's murder in silence? Was John Kennedy quite so liberated from cold war cliches as Mr. Garrison maintains?) But the stench is there, and clings to each of us. Why were Kennedy's brain and lungs examined at Bethesda for evidence of a frontal shot? Why was his body whished away to Washington before the legally required Texas inquest? Why?

John Leonard became editor of the *New York Times Book Review* in January 1971. The *Times* has never reviewed any of Dick Gregory's four books. Here is an author who went from being a pioneer for black performers on television to being a write-in presidential candidate, yet he was ignored; only now with his latest book does the *Times* present a review, and that is critical of Gregory for his paranoid conspiracy theories and facts linking the CIA with several assassinations.

The *Times* has never reviewed my own book, *How a Satirical Editor Became a Yippie Conspirator in Ten Easy Years* (published by Putnam). I wrote to Leonard, trying to find out why. Since the *Realist* was the first contemporary underground paper —and since the book was praised lavishly by Joseph Heller, Groucho Marx, Terry Southern, Kurt Vonnegut Jr., Susan Sontag, Julius Lester and others —a review would have seemed appropriate. Leonard wrote back to me, saying: "We have a review of your book in the house; it's not a very good one, I'm afraid." Even that never appeared. I've since found out that the review was extremely favorable, and the critic was paid for it. So John Leonard lied to me.

I publicly accuse the CIA of controlling the *New York Times* policy. Among other things, my book quotes Mort Sahl on the TV show from which he was fired: "I went to the Archives (and saw) the Zapruder film. I was in there for several hours, running it, then looking at it frame by frame on a slide projector. When the President is first struck it seems that he's struck in the back. It's reasonably obvious looking at it, you don't have to be a ballistics expert. Then he's struck in the throat —and his hands go up —and he begins to fall slowly into Mrs. Kennedy's lap, he sags as the life goes out of him, and then he's hit in the head, and as he's hit in the head it's the force of a *train* hitting you. The President is hit from the right front. I saw it repeatedly. I saw a major portion of his skull fly to the rear and to the left. *(Audience recoils audibly.)* Yes, it's shocking, and it'll help any of you who can't make up your mind about where you are in this. . . . "

The fight over the Pentagon Papers was a shrewdly conspired scenario to make it seem as though the *Times* were fighting for freedom of the press. However, the material was critical of Johnson, not Nixon. And, although the *Times* ran the full Warren Commission Report all in one day's edition, they serialized the Pentagon Papers, thus setting the stage for the court battle which —even though so many never actually read through the material — nevertheless left the *image* that the *Times* would stand up to the government when it came to the first amendment. That line of credibility established; they could then come out editorially in favor of Nixon's peace proposal to Vietnam, that a junior high school student could see through so easily.

When World War Two ended, Werner von Braun was not the only Nazi the United States acquired. This country also imported German Intelligence experts who organized the CIA here. Fascism grew through control of the most important media, as well as the legal processes. It's foolish to believe that the Rand Corporation could engineer a dictatorship in Greece but not here; or that the CIA could plot the assassination of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy but not Kent State and Jackson State and, yes, even Sharon Tate and the others, partly as a propaganda device to discredit the communal family, psychedelics, rock lyrics — all the things that add up to a cultural revolution that could affect the American economy which is based on a kind of mindless productivity.

Even if Paul Revere were a paranoid schizophrenic it doesn't mean the British *weren't* coming.

Love,

Paul Krassner
The Realist
1772 Vallejo
San Francisco, Calif. 94123

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